

E1-1623

Tina Liebling
State Representative

District 30A
Rochester



Minnesota House of Representatives

July 21, 2005

Ms. Victoria Rutson
Section of Environmental Analysis
Case Control Unit
Finance Docket No. 33407
Surface Transportation Board
1925 K Street NW
Washington D.C. 20423-0001



Dear Ms. Rutson:

I am writing today regarding my concerns with the proposed Dakota, Minnesota and Eastern (DME) rail project that would run through Rochester, Minnesota and the Surface Transportation Board's (STB) Draft Supplement Environmental Impact Statement (DSEIS).

A number of constituents have contacted me regarding DME's proposal and how it will adversely affect the City of Rochester. I would like to share my concerns and echo theirs over the disruptions the increased rail traffic will create and the lack of measures in the STB's recommendations to mitigate them.

Rochester is a rapidly growing city that is now the third largest in Minnesota and an economic engine to the entire state. The DME proposal will create a significant increase in the level of noise and vibrations neighboring residents and businesses will experience, endanger public safety and have other adverse effects. This will not only negatively impact the quality of life for a great number of people but also cause financial harm as property values diminish and visitors and businesses are discouraged from coming to Rochester.

It greatly disappoints me that while the STB acknowledges these negative effects of the expansion, it has not taken the necessary steps to combat them. The easiest way to achieve this is to approve an alternative route that bypasses Rochester, for instance the old Iowa, Chicago and Eastern tracks that DME now owns. At the very least, the STB could recommend sound walls and more assistance to insulate properties against the adverse impacts of the increased rail traffic.

The good news is there is still time to take advantage of these and other alternatives that would benefit the people of Rochester and allow the project to move forward. I hope you do follow the orders of the 8th Circuit Court of Appeals and take a serious second look at the items outlined. There are a number of positive alternatives available that will solve or lessen many of the issues myself and others have with the DSEIS. Again, the best of which is the alternative route to the south that bypasses Rochester.

Thank you in advance for your time and attention to this very important issue to the residents of Rochester.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Tina".

Tina Liebling
State Representative

